DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 005 EA 026 909

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TITLE A Case Study Evaluation of the Reflective Process in a Preparation Program for Educational Administrators.
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 12-15, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Adult Learning; Cognitive Processes; *Critical Thinking; *Educational Administration; Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Leadership Training; Problem Solving; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Journals; Thinking Skills

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a case study that examined the reflective process in an educational-administration preparation program. Data were gathered from interviews with students enrolled in the program and analysis of their journals and classroom discussions. The Administrator Development Academy (ADA) is a 6-week preservice program designed to recruit talented teachers who might be interested in an administrative career, provide them with a knowledge base and communication skills, and promote the adult development of the subjects. The program is based on the concepts of adult learning and is a very experiential learning program. Students reported that they found the concept of reflection difficult to grasp in the early stages of the course. However, most experienced gradual acceptance and an understanding of the process by the end of 6 weeks. Most of the subjects felt that personal reflection came to be very important to them, and they enjoyed the time devoted to the process. It seems that an administrative knowledge base is needed as well as a general education base of experiences, and as this base is built and expanded, the cognitive structures can be changed--and thus the patterns of thinking of oneself with one's environment. Valuable program tools included guided reflection, trust-building for effective group reflection, the use of standard diagnostic instruments for feedback, and the writing of philosophy statements before and after the course and weekly journals. One figure and a sample reflection log and self-evaluation matrix are included. Contains 18 references. (LMI)

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A CASE STUDY EVALUATION OF THE REFLECTIVE PROCESS IN A PREPARATION PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Educational Research Association

Chicago

October, 1994

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Most preparation programs for school administrators struggle with the problem of connecting theory and knowledge base with actual practice. Also, as the job of school administrator becomes more complex, it is more important to have new approaches to defining and solving problems, and methods in which to teach these approaches. The question becomes simply, how does one teach and develop that in prospective administrators? How can one best work for the transfer of training? A number of recent authors (Hart, 1993; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; and Schon, 1987) believe that one way to do that is through personal reflection, and then developing a plan to train administrators to better use reflection in their practice.

This case study evaluation sought to explore and understand how a personal reflection strand woven throughout the curriculum of a preparation program would be accepted, utilized, and further developed to help the prospective administrators with the method of personal reflection. This paper combines recent research and writings with the action research of the administrator development academy to present more information on the use of reflection in preparation programs.

METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative study, with the results and conclusions based on interviews, writings, discussions, and journals kept by the students. The framework for the study was the University of Cincinnati's innovative Administrator Development Academy and involving the 45 subjects and 8 instructors.

The Administrator Development Academy (ADA) is a very intense, innovative six-week preservice program conceived as a means to proactively recruit talented teachers who might be interested in an administrative career, teach a knowledge base and communication skills, and finally to promote the adult development of the subjects. The ADA is team-taught, based on the concepts of adult learning, and is a very experiential learning program. The Academy is a paradigm of leadership, collegiality, and learning, and it attempts to model what it teaches. The activities and strategies of the ADA curriculum consist of: group activities, simulations, role-taking, guided reflection, self-assessments, and some personal planning. The Academy requires a lot of collegial support to meet the challenges which are presented.

The following outlines the sequence of the University of Cincinnati Administrator Development Academy curriculum as stated in the 1994 syllabus:

Week 1 - Team building, problem solving, and the development of communication skills and process.

Week 2 - Consensus process skills, exploration of present and future alternatives in education. Vision building. A description of the learning center of the future compared with the present.

Week 3 - A study of the role of the educational leader for the learning center of the future. Principle centered leadership.

Week 4 - Simulated experiences, situations, and cases of the principal, and reflective practice. Issues defined. Inquiry teams project plans.

Week 5 - Inquiry teams complete study projects into issues of educational leadership and the present and future school. Each inquiry incorporates craft knowledge, research knowledge, and theory.

Week 6 - Personal reflections and plans. Principal's role in the task areas and proficiencies. Planning of Master's/certification programs. Closing luncheon.

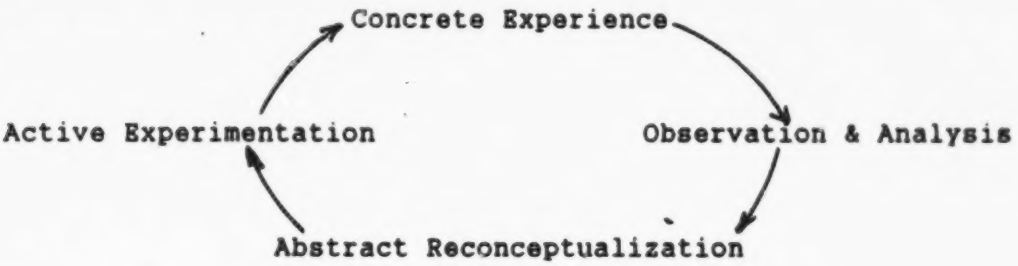
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Warren Bennis' book, On Becoming a Leader (1989), he states that "true understanding comes from reflecting on your experience" and feels that it is essential to knowing oneself. Bennis, as a practitioner, has developed his own thoughts out in the field of reality.

For a theory to the use and importance of reflection, one needs to examine Kolb's (1984) experiential learning

cycle, and the thought that while experience is the basis for learning, learning cannot take place without reflection (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Figure 1 - Experiential Learning Cycle



As stated in Osterman & Kottkamp (1993):

"Experiential learning theory maintains further that learning is a dialectic and cyclical process consisting of four stages: experience, observation and reflection, abstract reconceptualization, and experimentation (Kolb, 1984). While experience is the basis for learning, learning cannot take place without reflection. Conversely, while reflection is essential to the process, reflection must be integrally linked with action (Figure 1). Reflective practice, then, integrating theory and practice, thought and action, is, as Schon described, a "dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful" (1987, p. 31)"

Thus, both the practitioner and the theorist explain the need for reflection in developing leaders, in aiding them to learn how to problem solve based on their experiences.

Hart (1993b) states that "reflection requires practice and involves different skills from those required for traditional methods of study and learning, because the learner must constantly and consciously draw links among formal knowledge, recommended actions, and predicted (or observed) outcomes."(p. 341) Hart feels that cognition theory postulates that this process produces an adjusted schema that will be applied the next time an event occurs. (p. 342) This is the start of what we view as experience and becoming an expert. According to Ohde and Murphy's (1993) study, "findings suggest that experts differ from novices in the knowledge they possess, in the patterns of their thinking, and in the performance of their actions."(p. 76) The "patterns of thinking" is what lends credence to the theory of cognitive development as a basis for studying reflection and its value to gaining and learning from experience, and becoming an expert.

It is important to examine two models of reflection for comparison of similarities and differences. The first is Schon's (1983) reflection-on-action versus reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action is based on looking back on an experience, while the latter involves the ability to reflect, and to act, while the situation is unfolding and

occurring. A second model is one developed by Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985). The three major stages in Boud et al's (1985) model, which is based on Schon's reflection-on-action, are:

1. Returning to experience
2. Attending to feelings
3. Reevaluating the experience

The advantages of these stages apply to structured reflection on case studies and vicarious experience as well as personal experience. (Hart, 1993, p. 215)

Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1985) also offer four processes that are critical to quality reflection in their model:

Association - relating new information to what is already known

Integration - seeking relationships among the data

Validation - determining the authenticity of values, ideas, and feelings

Appropriation - acquisition and integration of the new knowledge

Hart (1993) finishes with "this notion of reflective practice to enhance experiential learning capitalizes on the logic of deliberate, conscious thought as a way to improve the quality and quantity of learning that results." (p. 216)

These theories provide a model for learning based on experience, and present an understanding of reflection for the practitioner, yet based on theory. Hart (1993) feels

that "another positive impact on professional practice of the skill and knowledge acquired during reflection is an increase in awareness and sensitivity to one's own thinking and values. This awareness makes self-consciousness and improved thinking more likely." (p. 217)

A strong reflective process will involve effective adult learning processes, based on the works of Malcolm Knowles (1980). One must keep these in mind in working with adults and developing the reflective strand throughout the Academy. First, adults learn what they really want to learn, so it is important to have a goal that intends to develop a self-directed learner. Second, adults learn by doing and participating, thus the heavy use of group work, case studies, and simulations. Very little lecture is done, as we let them offer direction for the instruction in discovery, inquiry, and research-learning methods. Third, adult learners have many and varied experiences that are valuable resources to enrich learning situations. Lee Shulman, of Stanford University, has sometimes referred to reflection as "refraction" based on this third principle of adult learners. He feels that refraction suggests a lens through which one sees, based on one's experiences and background, while reflection is just a mirror image reflecting back the same. The Academy, through group work, hopes to take advantage of those many different experiences being brought to the learning situation by utilizing them to

help each other. The reflective process being taught also hopes to take advantage of those same experiences, and then also the group experience as well.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the subjects stated that it was very hard to grasp the idea of reflection and as to what was needed to be written down and thought about in the early stages of the Academy. It was difficult to understand in both content and process. Yet by the end of the six-week experience, most of the subjects felt that personal reflection came to be very important to them, and they enjoyed the time devoted to the process. A theory for this gradual acceptance and understanding can be developed from the theories of cognitive development. Oja (1978) states: "cognitive-developmental theories of growth are based on the assumption that human development results from changes in cognitive structures, which are thinking patterns by which a person relates him/herself to his/her environment." (p. 37) It seems that an administrative knowledge base is needed as well as a general educational base of experiences, and as this base is built and expanded, the cognitive structures can be changed---and thus the patterns of thinking of oneself with one's environment. Now the cognitive schema are more readily accessible for a better and more knowledgeable reflective experience. Although used a second

time, it is still most appropriate when Hart (1993) states that cognition theory postulates that this process produces an adjusted schema that will be applied the next time an event occurs. The subject is now moving toward a change in thinking based on reflection.

This study, as did an earlier study by Zigler (1992), found that guided reflection was of more value than just allowing the students to "reflect" on their experiences. To take this further, Zigler (1993) states in another article that guided reflection seemed to work best, and it allowed the students to get the most out of their reflective writings.

Glickman (1985), Levine (1989), and Pitner (1987) felt that personal guided reflection was an extremely important part of promoting adult development. Giving the students questions to think about and discuss in their journals made the reflection more focused and many felt this was better. From Zigler's (1992) standpoint as a researcher, having read the journals, the guided reflection also made them discuss theory, ideas, and concepts more in their reflection. Without the guided reflection, most journal writing was peripheral and dealt with feelings about others and the difficulty of the tasks.

Another term for this was problem-based reflection. Other methods for guided reflection involve the use of journals, specific questions to be answered in those

journals, writing on case studies, and on contrived situations.

Group reflection was very important to the subjects, but involved a lot of trust amongst the members of the group. Thus, the beginning of the Academy involves a lot of interpersonal communications training to build that trust among the group. The students were re-trained in feedback, listening skills, paraphrasing, and using descriptors rather than evaluative terms and statements. It was necessary to build trust between the students so that they really could reflect critically as a group, being honest with each other and yet not hurt one another.

Twale and Short (1989) offer an excellent description of what group reflection is trying to accomplish: "Critical reflection means adapting a strategy through which participants qua practitioners make sense of unique or unclear situations using reflective thinking and analysis to develop an understanding of the complexities of schooling. After the group identified a real experience and recounted what had happened, they analyzed and then reflected upon it. Meanwhile, the group facilitator qua advocate continually critiqued, analyzed, and challenged what was important, to whom, and what actions lead to which responses within the school context. The model forced the self-examination of the student's position, its base in personal culture and

school tradition, and the impact that these traditions have on action." (p. 151-152)

Bolman and Deal (1993) feel that group reflection is important as the participants bring different backgrounds and frameworks of thought to the same case being discussed, which expands the understanding of what is really going on in the case and then also to generate more options for what might be done.

Instrument feedback was found to be very important to the subjects, and relates back to Hart's statement about knowing more about oneself. The information helped the students to understand themselves, and also how to better relate to other styles that they have to work with. Kottkamp (1990) states that "standard diagnostic, counseling, and even research instruments may be of tremendous value in sparking the "surprises" which lead to significant reflection, or in providing analytical categories for reflection on one's theory-in-use." (p. 189) This could be learning style inventories or leadership style inventories that offer insight to their own self-knowledge, beliefs, and subsequent actions.

A platform, or more specifically, a written position of philosophy is used as another tool for reflection. It is written the very first day, and then they are asked to write it again at the end of the Academy experience. Kottkamp

(1990) states that "once the platform is formulated, even in the preliminary stage, it may become a vehicle for reflection on the congruity or incongruity between espoused theory and theory-in-use, between intention and action, or between "what I say and what I do."

Writing the philosophy paper engages the student in a reflective process in which they have to examine their own thoughts and beliefs based on their present knowledge and experiences. Many of these beliefs will be tested throughout the six weeks of the Academy via simulations, readings, group discussions. All of this information helps with their self-assessment. Then at the end of the Academy they are asked to write the philosophy paper one more time, based on their reflection of where they are at with their beliefs and personal theories at this time.

Conclusions can also be drawn for instructors as to how they may promote the reflection process and the value of the process for the subjects. This draws from theory and the works of Hart (1993b) and Kottkamp (1990).

As instructors in the Academy it was difficult to stay with adult learning principles and to allow them to become self-directed learners. The instructors constantly had to remind themselves to switch from normal pedagogical instructional techniques over to a discovery and inquiry type instruction based on what experiences the students have had. Based on a study by Hart (1993b), she found that "it

was hard for coaches to refrain from elaborating, providing insight they had gained from their experience, or giving answers by describing others' solutions to similar problems before students had even properly or creatively "defined" the problem." (p. 350)

That same study by Hart (1993b) offered further insights as to "coaches who were most effective (according to student reports) argued that they took their cues for questioning from the students and "always had to come back to looking at the full picture," asking "how does this fit into the plan of the school--the holistic approach." (p. 350) And when asked what kinds of questions yielded the "best" responses, Hart says that questions that directed the students toward problem solving were what coaches felt were most important. These were responses like: "What if?" "Have you thought about....?" "Where would you find this information?" "How would you feel if...?" (p. 350)

Kottkamp (1990) offers more information when looking at the instructor's role in the reflective process and a situation like the Academy where one is trying to promote self-guided learners. He states that "Communication is the central issue in helping. The principle is simple. We must communicate using descriptions and refrain from using prescriptions. But actually doing this is very difficult, and, for most of us it requires a great deal of reflection-on- and reflection-in-action." (p. 200) Descriptors explain facts, while prescriptors too often sound evaluative. This

is what Kottkamp is trying to stay away from, so that the students can examine and reflect for themselves.

Hart (1993b) concludes that "coaches consequently needed training and practice in reflective and inductive questioning; professors need help moving away from lecture, discussion, and laboratory methods toward experience-grounded learning activities." (p. 358)

It is important to look at examples of forms used for guided reflection with the Academy. Form A is a daily reflection form that the students are asked to do at the end of each day. In the beginning, the students are given time before they leave so they realize the importance of this reflection, but also so they can have help with the structure, such as a list of the day's activities. The structure shows them how to review the day and the activities and how to start connecting their thoughts to theory and their newly expanding knowledge base.

Form A is a more complex and difficult form to start, which later concedes to a more open-ended type of journal form. In fact, later in the Academy they are allowed to write freely in their journals to address their own thoughts and ideas, without the Form A at all. This matches the difficulty with which the students have in grasping the idea of reflection relating back to theories and concepts, yet moves to more freedom as they build their knowledge base and their ease with which they can later connect ideas and

experiences. The students need the structure until they build enough knowledge base and experiences that they can more easily connect their experiences to what they have learned and discussed. At that point, the structure of the daily logs is eased away and students are allowed to go in their own personal direction.

A weekly summary-type journal is also used to draw conclusions on the week's past experiences. (Form B) This form is used early in the Academy again to help teach them how to connect their thoughts and feelings to what they are experiencing and learning. Form C is an experimental form used later in the Academy by some students, but much later the students are again released of any standard forms for reflection for the week, allowing them to now use their experience to make their learning much more personal.

It is hoped that the importance of the reflective process is taught well enough for the students to want to use it as a tool during the Academy. This emphasis is presented during the first week of the Academy.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for the use of the results are important for the many new administrator preparation programs that are trying so hard to link theory to practice, especially in the present times of such complex problems facing school administrators. Other program instructors can examine the results and use parts that seem to fit their programs best.

The results are backed up with theory and concepts, which would allow their adaptation to other programs.

The paper also allows a look at the Administrator Development Academy which has grown and developed, always evolving, into a leading preparation program which utilizes adult learning principles along with a very intentional reflective process built in to the curriculum.

RECORD AND REFLECTION LOG

Date_____Log Number_____

Program Administrator Development Academy

Name_____

This log is to record your learning experiences and the ideas you have about them. It should be filled in at the end of each day in which you are involved in the experiential learning of the program. These particular record sheets are absoluteiy personal and confidential; no one will ever see or read them unless you decide to share them, so you may express yourself as you wish. You may add additional pages if necessary. Once each week you will analyze your log and report on your analysis. There are five categories below for your personal writing:

I. Record or list the activities and experiences you have been involved in today.

II. Reflect upon the above. Explain those thoughts, ideas, concepts, or questions which have grown out of the activities and experiences you have recorded.

III. Rate your course activities during this period: (circle one)

Worthless	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Invaluable
0	1	2	3	4	5

Why?

IV. Rate the extent to which the course during this period contributed to your own person growth and development: (circle one)

Worthless	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Invaluable
0	1	2	3	4	5

How?

V. Other thoughts and comments:

NAME _____ COURSE/PROGRAM _____ LOG PERIOD _____

BECOME AWARE/INFORM/DESCRIBE	ANALYZE/SYNTHESIZE/GENERALIZE	APPLICATION/DECISION-MAKING	
			Self-Awareness
			Awareness of Others and Environment
			Skill Development
			Cognitive Area (Academic)
			Career Understanding

ASSESSMENT MATRIX

LOG NUMBER	
EXPERIENCE RATING	
LEARNING RATING	

Form B 19

Form C

LOG ANALYSIS

NAME _____ LOG PERIOD _____

1. Fill in the number matrix from your daily reflective logs.
2. Write your insights in each of the four personal quadrants below. Use phrases and explanations from your daily logs.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

SELF

COMPETENCE

READINESS

ASSESSMENT MATRIX

LOG NUMBER	
ACTIVITIES RATING	
LEARNING RATING	

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